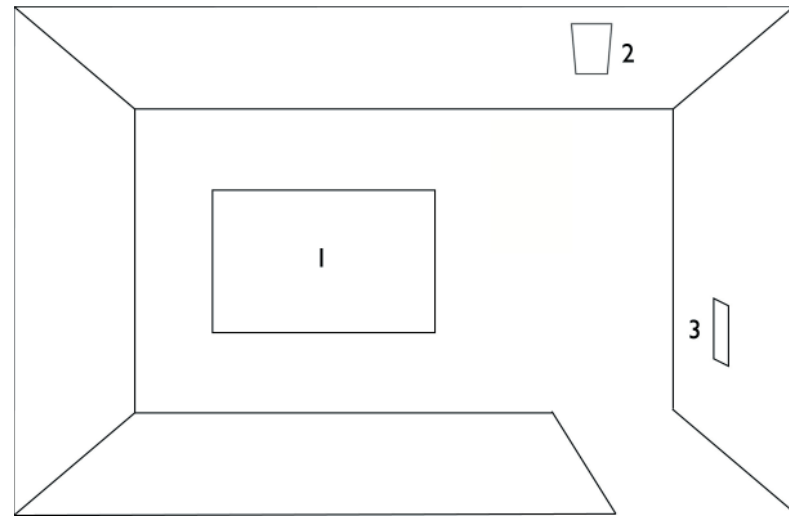


Gallery 5



The works in this gallery reflect on the appropriation of foreign artefacts in ways that remove or disregard their original cultural significance.

1. *Carpet Invaders*, 2002

This is one of Simon's earliest works and relates to his keen interest in games and game playing when he was growing up. Simon has combined the 1980s 8-bit console blockbuster *Space Invaders* with graphic designs taken from a 19th Century Caucasian prayer rug in the form of a projection. In doing so, he transforms the real object of the rug, with all its hidden histories, into a representation, combined with the pretend tanks of *Space Invaders*.

Visitors are invited to play using the gamepad.

2. *Map representing the distribution of poultry in Ghana*, 2010

This map, originally created to graphically represent the distribution of poultry around Ghana, has been modified by the artist to create an image by joining some of the coloured dots. The work reflects on how people find images within the representation of foreign culture where they are not necessarily intended.

3. *Miniature painting*, 2010

This miniature painting was made in India and pictorially represents the region of Rajasthan. Simon purchased one of the paintings, produced to order by a family business, and asked for the name of the artspace in Krakow that he co-organises, Goldex Poldex, to be added to the image.

ARNOLFINI

EXHIBITION GUIDE

JANEK SIMON

30 JANUARY - 5 APRIL 2010

“The artist is an explorer seeking new territories and new means to evoke aesthetic experiences. If he succeeds and finds them in an unexpected place, this is great satisfaction, also for the audience.”

Janek Simon, 2007

Introduction

For his solo exhibition at Arnolfini, Janek Simon investigates new understandings of geography and distance in the globalised world by revisiting key locations of the historic Trans-Atlantic slave trade triangle – West Coast Africa, the Caribbean and Bristol.

He is inspired by theorist Paul Virilio's concept of the 'end of geography', which proposes the idea of the contraction of time and space as a result of the process of globalisation. The exhibition consists of an environment with both found and constructed components, including historic maps made into 3D projections, visualisations of time-space compression for the Atlantic Ocean, documentation of his research travel, colonial-era anthropological studies from his personal magazine archive, and collages appropriating the pages of key structuralist ethnography books.

Simon's experience of travel has always been an important inspiration for his work. The exhibition reflects on the relationship between tourists and tourism, in particular, how tourists view foreign culture, and the way the tourism industry looks to simplify and 'package' their own culture for the consumption of tourists.

Born in 1977, Janek Simon is one of the exciting generation of emerging artists working in Poland today. He was artist-in-residence at Arnolfini during 2008-9 and currently lives and works in Krakow.

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Gallery I

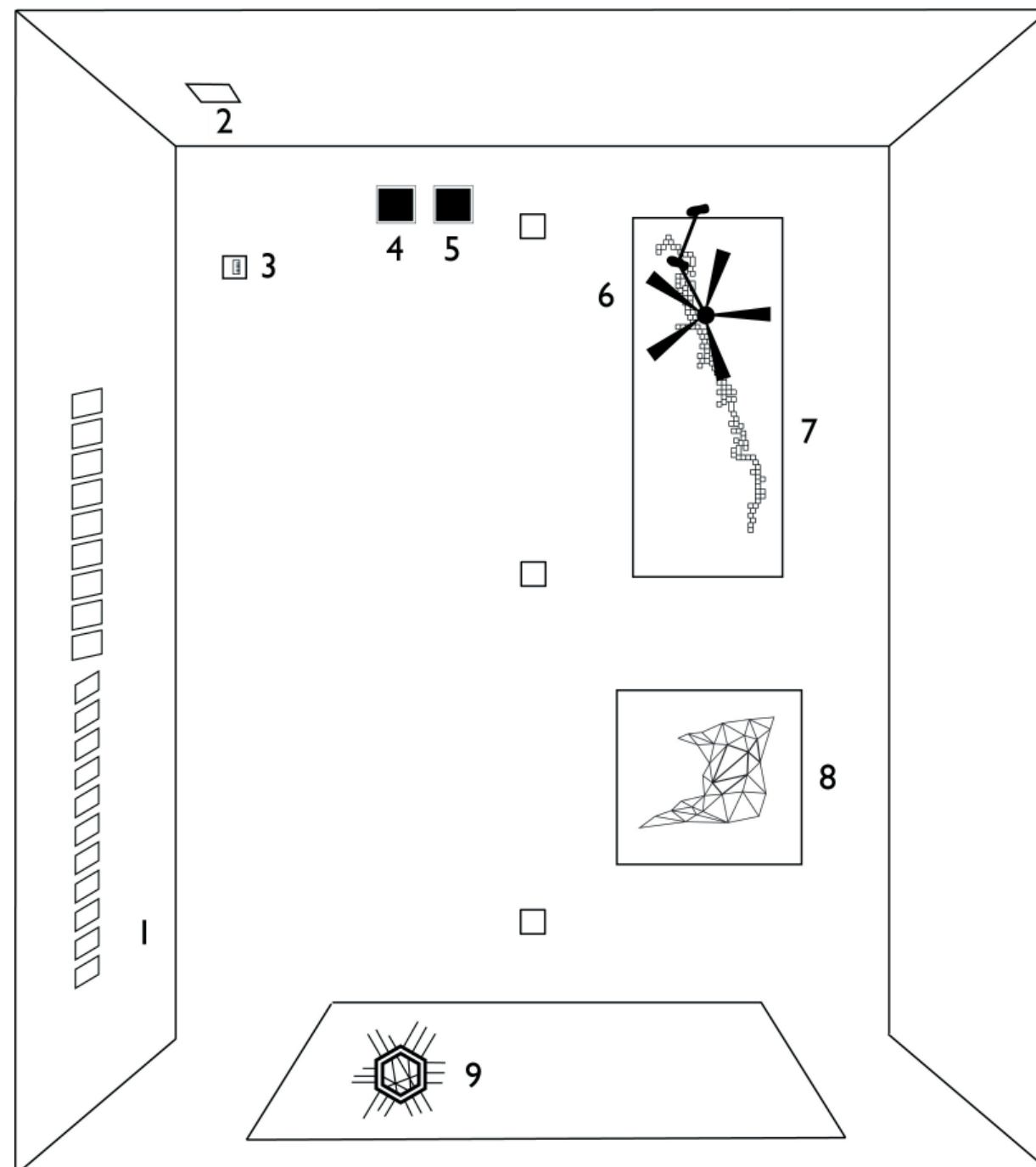
1. Artist's reactions to *Morze* covers; perception-analysed with DIY skin galvanometer, 2010

Morze was a magazine in Poland which mixed travel and political ideology through the 20th Century. For example it portrayed a colonialist focus before the Second World War and was filled with communist propaganda after it. It was a significant source of knowledge and mythology of other cultures over many decades, and for Polish people it still evokes emotional responses about the legacies of those eras. *Morze* also possesses a nostalgia towards a time when there were many unknown communities and regions of the globe, before the rapid growth of the tourism industry.

The skin galvanometer is designed to measure the fluctuation in electrical resistance of skin, which changes with different emotional reactions, and works in a similar way to a lie detector. The artist made this device, and has tested his own emotional responses to looking at copies of *Morze* from different eras, providing a graphic interpretation of his own temporal relationship to the magazine and its nostalgic themes of travel and discoveries of new cultures. The graphs are presented underneath each cover.

2. A Page from *Tristes Tropiques* analysed with eye-tracking equipment, 2010

Like the DIY skin galvanometer, this work investigates issues around the perception of other cultures. The book *Tristes Tropiques* (Sadness of the Tropics) by Lévi-Strauss is an important historic study of ethnography. This page from the book shows one of the chiefs of the Tupi-Kwahib tribe. During a long expedition in the Brazilian jungle, Lévi-Strauss became the first westerner to make contact with them. Through reading this rather beautiful and emotive encounter, Simon sensed a certain disappointment in Lévi-Strauss with the realisation that he had discovered, in a way, the edges of humanity. Psychologically, as well as geographically, a new destination had been reached. The image of the tribesman, for unknown reason, was juxtaposed in the book with that of a monkey. Simon has analysed the image with eye-tracking equipment which gives an insight into the exact act of looking at an image, highlighting how the juxtaposition of images in this way can create highly problematic associations.



3. *Chinese keyboard*, 2010

This device constructed by the artist plays Chinese-style music. The simplification of authentic musical styles represents the 'orientalist' packaging of foreign cultures that is at the heart of tourism and media representation. Ethnic symbols are reduced to become a form of marketing.

4. *The way to the port in Tamatave*, 2006

This video was taken by the artist during a previous trip to Madagascar, and shows him being transported around on a rickshaw. It reflects on the ethical issues that arise around the 'exotic' perception of foreign cultures when placed in the privileged position of being a tourist.

5. *A guided tour of Fort Amsterdam*, 2010

This recorded guided tour is around one of the main slave trade forts, now in a state of ruin, on the coast of Ghana, West Africa. The guide is incomprehensible as his ability to speak English is limited for his predominantly Western tourists, and he also appears to be suffering from ill health. The work portrays how opportunities for tourism can be built around heritage.

6. *Untitled (ceiling fan)*, 2007

This work is a very personal reference by the artist to his first trip to India. The journey produced a complex excitement for Simon, and the movement of the shoes as the fan spins, reflects this chaotic sensation on a physical and metaphorical level.

7. *Time-space compression of the coast of Ghana*, 2010

This sculpture is a three-dimensional visualisation of actual (temporal) distances between points on the map of Ghana. It includes several other sets of data, such as the cost of transport and the size of the flow of traffic between places. It is an alternative type of cartography that offers different understandings to the historical topographic style we are more familiar with.

8. *Time-space compression of Trinidad*, 2010

This is similar to the time-space compression of Ghana, but looking at Trinidad. The artist has visualised the data here in a slightly different way.

9. *Time-space compression of the Atlantic region*, 2010

This sculpture is a portrayal of time-space compression of the Atlantic Ocean region from Henry the Navigator to now. Once again different sets of data are represented. The design of the object is a reference to the work of Minard – a famous 19th Century graph-designer.